

# CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES



## MOTION PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERA OPERATORS



### WHAT DO MOTION PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERA OPERATORS DO?

The occupation of MOTION PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERA OPERATORS is made up of many different jobs, all of which are combined during the principal photography phase of a motion picture. The occupations usually included within this category are Director of Photography, Camera Operator, First Assistant Photographer, Second Assistant Photographer, and Film Loader. In some large studios, Film Loader is a separate category, although when the unit is on location, the jobs of the Second Assistant Photographer and Film Loader are combined. All of these associated occupations work at operating or moving a motion picture camera. There are also Photographers that take

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still shots. Directors of Photography are in charge of photographing a motion picture.

Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators perform the following tasks based on their specialties:

#### *Directors of Photography*

- Supervise the entire technical crew.
- Supervise all photography, including underwater, aerial, or special effects photography, process plates, and inserts.
- Work with the director, determining lens size and camera angles.
- Maintain photographic quality of the production and direct the technical personnel to achieve the appropriate photographic lighting effect.
- Determine the camera, film, and lighting equipment to be used.
- Help and advise the producer and attend script conferences whenever requested by the producer.
- Give advice in connection with the design and selection of sets, costumes, and locations.
- Assist in simplifying production, heightening production quality, and staying within the budget.

#### *Camera Operators*

- Pan and tilt the camera during shooting.
- Compose and frame each shot as determined by the Director of Photography.

#### *First Assistant Photographers*

- Unpack, assemble, and adjust the camera.
- Ensure that the camera is mechanically fit for photography.

- Clean lenses and other camera parts.
- Make sure the equipment is in perfect working order.
- Move the camera and tripod to a new set-up and assure that the camera is level.
- Thread the camera and measure the distances.
- Set the lens focus, and follow the focus during photography.
- Operate the zoom lens, making changes as rehearsed.

### ***Second Assistant Photographers***

- Receive and keep inventory on raw film stock.
- Prepare the slate that describes the scene on which they are working.
- Download exposed film for shipment to the lab.
- Reload all magazines with fresh raw film stock.

**Film Loaders** may be used to perform the following tasks, when the motion picture is being shot in a studio:

- Keep records of film checked out of the loading room.
- Upload and download all film magazines.
- Help store all camera equipment in the camera department or in the loading room.

### **WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?**

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators include:

- Operation and Control – Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- Equipment Selection – Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Technology Design – Generating or adapting equipment and technology to serve user needs.

- Mathematics – Using mathematics to solve problems.
- Fine Arts – Knowledge of theory and techniques required to compose, produce, and perform works of music, dance, visual arts, drama, and sculpture.
- Communications and Media – Knowledge of media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- Visualization – The ability to imagine how something will look after it is moved around or when its parts are moved or rearranged.
- Written Comprehension – The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
- Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Oral Expression – The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- Control Precision – The ability to quickly and repeatedly adjust the controls of a machine or a vehicle to exact positions.

### **WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?**

Work in the motion picture industry is generally performed in a pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere. However, the work can be repetitive. For example, the same shot may have to be lined up over and over again. Therefore, one quality essential to Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators is patience. Also, location work can be strenuous; workers may be required to work in extreme cold, heat, or dampness.

### ***Union Membership***

Motion Picture Photographers at the major studios are members of the International Cinematographers Guild, usually known as Local 600, of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees.

## WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Estimated number of workers in 2000:	3,900
Estimated number of workers in 2010:	5,000
Projected Growth 2000-2010:	28.2%
Est. openings due to separations by 2010:	900

*These figures do not include self-employment.*

The figures represent the broad occupational group Camera Operators, Television and Motion Picture, which includes Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators.

### Trends

The estimated number of job opportunities for this small occupational group is expected to total 1,000 from 2000 through 2010.

## WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

### California Earnings

#### Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Motion Picture 2002 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$17.38	to	\$31.13
Average hourly wage	\$24.11		
Average annual wage	\$50,155		

*Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.*

### Hours

Many Photographers work an average of only two days a week. However, since they may work very long hours during these few days, or work during weekends, camera people have to be very flexible in their work availability. When on location, the minimum hours worked in a day are usually 12, and the minimum workweek is six days.

The number of hours and days worked in each week can vary.

## Benefits

Union members enjoy typical benefits such as vacation and holiday pay, health and life insurance, and retirement plans.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

### Education and Training

Photographers and Camera Operators generally get their skills attending formal post-secondary training at colleges, photographic institutes, universities, or through on-the-job training. Courses in cinematography are available in colleges, universities, and private schools. This type of work also requires the ability to concentrate intensely. Since the filming of a motion picture is a cooperative effort requiring the blending of many skills, a Photographer must be able to work well with other professionals.

### Licensing and Certification

A State license or certificate is not required for Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators.

### Continuing Education

Motion Picture Photographers and Camera Operators may be required to take formal courses to keep abreast of technological changes in the profession.

For more information on continuing educational opportunities, contact the unions and associations listed under the "Other Sources of Information" section below.

## HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Motion Picture Producers, Production Companies and Studios. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup> at [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov) or at America's Job Bank at [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us).

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at [www.calmis.ca.gov](http://www.calmis.ca.gov). Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office [www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm) or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, [www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop](http://www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop).

### WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Film Loader is the entry level, and beginners can rise through the various photography jobs up to Director of Photography; although generally they would only be expected to advance to Camera Operator. The advancement process is usually slow, however, and may take many years.

### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees  
1430 Broadway, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10018  
(212) 730-1770  
[www.iatse.lm.com](http://www.iatse.lm.com)

American Society of Cinematographers  
1782 North Orange Drive  
Hollywood, CA 90028  
(800) 448-0145  
[www.theasc.com](http://www.theasc.com)

Society of Camera Operators  
P.O. Box 2006  
Toluca Lake, CA 91610  
(818) 382-7070  
[www.soc.org](http://www.soc.org)

International Cinematographers Guild, Local 600  
7715 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 300  
Hollywood, CA 90046  
(323) 876-0160  
[www.cameraguild.com](http://www.cameraguild.com)

Employment Projections by Occupation  
[www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm)

Employment and Wages by Occupation  
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

### RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Photographers	No. 51
Film and Video Editors	No. 323
Broadcast Technicians	No. 359

### OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

<b>SOC</b> ( <i>Standard Occupational Classification</i> )	
Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Motion Picture	27-4031

<b>O*NET</b> ( <i>Occupational Information Network</i> )	
Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Motion Picture	27-4031.00

<b>OES</b> ( <i>Occupational Employment Statistics</i> )	
Camera Operators-TV and Motion Pictures	34026

<b>DOT</b> ( <i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i> )	
Director of Photography	143.062-010
Camera Operator	143.062-022
Optical-Effects-Camera Operator	143.260-010
Camera Operator, Animation	143.382-010

